

Soviet High Commissioner's Letter to the United States High Commissioner

October 2, 1952

To. Mr. L.E. Thompson
US High Commissioner
for Austria

Mr. High Commissioner:

The US Element kindly authorized the Soviet Repatriation Mission to visit the US Zone of Austria from September 22 to 28, 1952. However, I consider it necessary to inform you that the working conditions of the Soviet Mission during the period of its stay in the US Zone were exceptionally unfavorable.

(1) During the visit of displaced persons' camps and private quarters where Soviet citizens reside, the three Soviet officers were accompanied by three US escort officers, one representative of the American Embassy in Vienna, one M.P. officer and 2 or 3 enlisted M.P.s. In addition to this a squad of Austrian Police was stationed in camps during the stay of Soviet officers. In Austrian hotels where the Soviet officers were billeted, a strong police guard in civilian clothes was maintained. Such a large escort and guard attached to the Soviet Mission was not necessary and constituted a serious obstacle to the normal work of Soviet Officers with displaced Soviet citizens residing in the US Zone. Even US escorting officers themselves expressed repeatedly their surprise at such an "honorary" escort.

(2) In spite of the fact that the US Element did not object to the distribution of Soviet newspapers and periodicals among displaced Soviet citizens, the representative of the American Embassy, Mr. Matern, prohibited this.

(3) Referring to the instructions, which he had allegedly received from his Headquarters, the Commander of the escort, Major Anderson, USA, informed the Soviet officers, that they could speak with Soviet displaced citizens only after the US escort officers had themselves spoken with them and had been assured of their consent to an interview with the Soviet officers. When a Soviet citizen came to talk to members of the Mission in the Puch Camp, the US officers surrounded him, not permitting him to enter the room, and started to explain to him that he had the right to refuse to speak with the Soviet Mission. When visiting Soviet citizens, residing in private quarters, the Soviet officers had to wait in the street for the results of such explanations.

This is the only explanation for the fact, that many Soviet citizens were unable to meet the Soviet officers.

(4) Also with reference to instructions, the Soviet officers were prohibited from transmitting even through the camp administration to Soviet citizens letters from their relatives, residing in the Soviet Union.

(5) It was also not permitted to receive from the camp administration data concerning the number of Soviet citizens residing in one of the camps, while previously such information had been given freely.

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It is quite natural that under such conditions the Soviet Mission during its work in the US Zone was deprived of the opportunity to meet and to speak freely with Soviet displaced citizens on the subject of their repatriation, and, therefore, it was not able to fulfill the tasks assigned to it.

In view of the foregoing, I request you to give attention to establishing more normal working conditions in the future for the Soviet Repatriation Mission in the US Zone.

With the expression of my high esteem,

Lt. General /s/ V.P. SVIRIDOV

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